

IELRB Posting

Anna-Jonesboro High School Teachers and Educational Support Personnel

The professional teachers and staff of Anna-Jonesboro Community High School District #81 are proud of our community, our students, and of the quality of education we provide. We work hard every school day to make sure our students receive the kind of quality education that will prepare them well for college, technical school, and as members of the work force. We go above and beyond to make sure our extra-curricular programs are a source of student and community pride. We are glad to be in service to our students and our community.

Over the last seven months, the Association and school board have been engaged in negotiations for a new contract. No agreement has been reached. Even with the help of a federal mediator over the last four months, in three separate meetings, the school board and Association have not come to a mutually fair agreement.

The source of the dispute has been harsh proposals from the school board resulting in an ultimatum that is unnecessary and will ultimately hurt the quality of the school district by making it harder to attract and retain quality teachers.

To start, the school board has proposed a two-tier salary scheme that, if adopted, would create a permanent underclass of second-tier new hires who would be paid less than other teachers for their entire teaching careers. We have urged the school board to think hard about the negative consequences that would result from a two-tier salary schedule, especially in light of the fact that we would be the only school district south of the Chicago suburbs to implement such a system. The negative consequences include

- the difficulty of attracting quality new teachers to a district in which they would be paid less for their entire careers;
- the difficulty of retaining high quality teachers, if in fact we were fortunate enough to actually be able to recruit them in the first place;
- the lack of continuity within departments and the school created by the revolving door of teachers leaving for non two-tier salary schedule districts;
- how a new teacher would feel being part of a permanent underclass;
- the divisiveness that would result between new second-tier teachers and their first-tier professional colleagues;
- the harmful implications to professional idea sharing and course collaboration;

- the tension and stress that would result from years of resentment, complicating future bargaining and negatively impacting the relationship between the board and Association.

An unfair two-tier salary scheme for new teachers today will cause strain and bitterness in the school district for years. That's not fair to the teachers, the students, or the community.

As faculty and staff, we are well aware of the financial challenges facing Illinois school districts, including our own. We have done our part to help the district. We have accepted minimal or no increases to our salary/hourly schedules in recent years. We have worked with administration to keep increasing insurance costs at bay without a reduction in coverage. In the past, we have proposed, and the board has accepted, smart retirement incentives for experienced faculty and staff. The resulting retirements have saved the school district thousands and will continue to do so for years to come. As teachers and staff have left or retired, we have understood the financial need to reduce the number of positions, even though it has placed additional stress and burdens on remaining personnel.

In that attempt to be fiscally responsible, the Association has accepted increases to our salary schedule of 0%, 1%, and 1% in the last three school years. Moving forward, the Association feels its last proposal is modest and mindful of the current economic climate.

The last proposals of the Anna-Jonesboro Education Association are as follows:

- 1) 0% salary schedule increase for certified staff ~ district **savings**: \$52,183

Rationale The faculty recognizes the district's need to be fiscally responsible, and, therefore, is only asking that teachers remain on the current schedule. Due to retirement and attrition, the district will actually realize a savings over the amount spent on teacher salaries from the previous school year.

- 2) 1% salary schedule increase for non-certified staff ~ cost projection: \$7,489

Rationale The Association recognizes the hard work and professionalism of our Educational Support Personnel (ESP's) and strives to insure they earn a living wage. The minimal cost to the District of this proposal seems only fair and reasonable for the people who transport and feed our children, maintain a clean and safe educational environment, and play a crucial role in the day-to-day operation of our school.

- 3) 10% cap on insurance premium increase ~ cost projection: \$34,324 (\$66.52 per employee per month)
- Rationale* Historically, there was no cap on premium increases. However, in recent years, a cap has been negotiated at 15%, then 12%, and finally 10% for the previous school year. The Association has settled for little or no salary increases in order to maintain our insurance benefits. Out-of-pocket premium payments could result in a net decrease in take-home pay. For an employee making as little as \$20,000 yearly, any increase to insurance premiums would be considered substantial.
- 4) Redistribution of department chair stipends ~ cost projection: \$0
- Rationale* Due to attrition, the number of members decreased in some departments. Therefore, some departments would be combined, reducing the total number of department chairs. Additionally, due to increased responsibilities related to Common Core Standards and standardized testing, some stipends would be increased for chairs of certain departments.
- 5) Interest-based analysis of Tier 2 salary schedule ~ cost projection: \$0
- Rationale* The Association is willing to collaborate through interest-based analysis with the District regarding the potential implications of the State's tier-two pension system.
- 6) Increase of National Honor Society stipend ~ cost projection: \$200
- Rationale* Additional responsibility has been added to this position, as the Local Honor position has been eliminated with the expectation of a more active National Honor Society.
- 7) Renew retirement language from previous contracts ~ cost projection: \$9,622
- Rationale* By encouraging teachers to retire, the District realizes substantial savings that project over several years. Additionally, this incentive language has been in place since 2007-08.
- 8) Retro-active pay in one lump sum ~ cost projection: \$0
- Rationale* This is money that has already been earned but hasn't been paid due to an unsettled contract.

Conclusion

The Association's proposal will actually cost the district approximately \$5,000.00 less than the board's proposal that demands a two-tier salary schedule. We realize that accepting the board's two-tier salary proposal would result in a 1% salary increase across the board and would be financially beneficial to all current faculty. However and more importantly, the Association has the moral obligation to act as stewards in maintaining the educational integrity of A-JCHS. We feel that a two-tier salary schedule would be devastating to, not only the quality of academics, but also to the culture of the entire school. Due to the vital importance of this issue to our school and community, the Association is willing to accept less salary than the board has offered in order to avoid the negative consequences of a two-tier salary schedule.

The ultimatum of the school board – the two-tier salary scheme, additional insurance adjustments that will cost teachers, elimination of a retirement incentive program that has saved thousands of dollars to the school district – would result in a school district that's less competitive than the one we have today. No one wants a school staffed by second-tier educators or one that has a divisive atmosphere. That's not fair to students, teachers or anyone else who cares about the quality of the school system.

As teachers, we know there are better solutions. It is our goal, through negotiations, to come to a fair agreement that serves all parties well.